

Message Text

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TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 250579 TOSEC 160179

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: SP, PINT

SUBJECT: INR ASSESSMENT OF SHORT-TERM POST-FRANCO SITUATION

FROM HYLAND

1. LATEST BUT STILL UNCONFIRMED REPORTS FROM MADRID INDICATE THAT FRANCO EITHER HAS DIED OR IS NOT EXPECTED TO LIVE THROUGH THE NIGHT. IN EITHER CASE, THE SUCCESSION MACHINERY PROBABLY HAS BEEN SET IN MOTION BUT MAY BE HELD UP IF THE CAUDILLO SOMEHOW RECOVERS.
2. THE SUCCESSION TO PRINCE JUAN CARLOS, WHICH IS LEGALLY REQUIRED TO TAKE PLACE WITHIN EIGHT DAYS OF FRANCO'S DEATH OR INCAPACITATION, PROBABLY WILL GO SMOOTHLY, ALTHOUGH THE OUTLOOK IS SOMEWHAT LESS CERTAIN THAN IT WAS SIX MONTHS AGO.

--ANY THREAT TO THE TRANSITION APPEARS TO EMANATE FROM THE RIGHT, RATHER THAN THE LEFT. ALARMED BY SPAIN'S WORSENING PUBLIC ORDER PROBLEMS AND UNCERTAIN OF JUAN CARLOS' ABILITY AND POLITICAL INCLINATIONS, HARDLINE RIGHTISTS,

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CIVILIAN AND MILITARY, COULD ATTEMPT TO THWART THE SUCCES-

SION AND INSTALL A HARDLINER AS CHIEF OF STATE.

--IT IS MUCH MORE LIKELY, HOWEVER, THAT, NOT WANTING IMMEDIATELY TO BEGIN DISMANTLING A SYSTEM WHICH WAS CONSTRUCTED BASICALLY TO PROTECT CONSERVATIVE INTERESTS OR TO EXACERBATE ANY INCIPIENT DIVISIONS WITHIN THE MILITARY, THEY WILL WORK TO INFLUENCE, NEUTRALIZE, OR BYPASS JUAN CARLOS, RATHER THAN REPLACE HIM.

3. BEHIND A FACADE OF REGIME UNITY AND SUPPORT FOR THE PRINCE, COMPETING REGIME CURRENTS--RIGHTISTS, CENTRISTS, AND CENTER-LEFTISTS--WILL BE MANEUVERING FURIOUSLY. PRIME MINISTER ARIAS, THOUGH NOT REQUIRED TO TENDER HIS RESIGNATION, WILL PROBABLY DO SO. THE PRINCE, WHILE CLEARLY PREFERRING A PRIME MINISTER OF HIS OWN CHOOSING--CURRENT AMBASSADOR TO THE UK MANUEL FRAGA IRIBARNE IS PROMINENTLY MENTIONED AS A POSSIBILITY--COULD REFUSE ARIAS' RESIGNATION, OPTING FOR CONTINUITY, AT LEAST FOR THE SHORT TERM.

4. THE MODERATE OPPOSITION, THOUGH FAR FROM ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE PRINCE, AND THE SPANISH COMMUNIST PARTY, THOUGH OPENLY OPPOSING HIM, ARE UNLIKELY TO CREATE ANY SERIOUS PROBLEMS FOR THE GOVERNMENT OVER THE SHORT TERM.

--THE MODERATES WILL PROBABLY DEFER A FINAL OPINION ON THE PRINCE UNTIL HE HAS BEEN GIVEN TIME TO PROVE HIMSELF.

--THE COMMUNISTS, LOATH TO ENCOURAGE THE "LAW AND ORDER" RIGHT, WILL PROBABLY MAINTAIN A LOW, ALBEIT VISIBLE, PROFILE.

5. JUST AS WITHIN THE REGIME, HOWEVER, THERE WILL BE INCREASED POLITICAL MANEUVERING BY THE OPPOSITION AS ALL THESE GROUPS ATTEMPT TO MAKE THE POINT THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT CAN BE NEITHER LEGITIMATE NOR EFFECTIVE WITHOUT THEIR PARTICIPATION AND WITHOUT A BASIC RESTRUCTURING OF SPAIN'S POLITICAL SYSTEM.

6. THE BASQUE TERRORIST ETA AND THE FAR-LEFT FRAP, HOWEVER, WILL PROBABLY ACCELERATE THEIR CAMPAIGNS OF POLIT-
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ICAL VIOLENCE. THEIR ACTIVITIES COULD SEVERELY TEST THE GOVERNMENT'S PUBLIC ORDER FORCES AND POLARIZE SPAIN POLITICALLY AT THIS CRUCIAL JUNCTURE. CONTINUING DETERIORATION OF PUBLIC ORDER WILL STRENGTHEN THE HARDLINE RIGHT AND WEAKEN THE PRINCE AND OTHER CENTRIST ELEMENTS OVER THE SHORT TERM.

7. IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, SPANISH INITIATIVES WILL BE DETER-

MINED LARGELY BY THE BALANCE OF POLITICAL FORCES WITHIN
THE REGIME AND BY FOREIGN REACTION TO THE NEW GOVERNMENT
AND ITS POLICIES.

--WESTERN EUROPEAN LEADERS, IN PARTICULAR, WILL PROBABLY
WELCOME THE TRANSITION BUT IF LEFT TO THEIR OWN DEVICES
WILL LIKELY BE CAUTIOUS AS REGARDS EC-SPAIN AND NATO-SPAIN
TIES UNTIL THE NEW GOVERNMENT HAS HAD TIME TO SHOW ITS
COLORS.

--WITH REGARD TO THE U.S., THE SUCCESSOR GOVERNMENT,
DESIRING TO MAINTAIN CONTINUITY, PROBABLY WOULD KEEP THE
BASE NEGOTIATIONS ON TRACK, ALTHOUGH THERE MAY BE A TEN-
DENCY TO QUESTION PREVIOUS SPANISH FORTHCOMINGNESS ON THE
GROUND THAT MADRID WAS TEMPORARILY ISOLATED AND VULNERABLE.

IN THE SPANISH SAHARA, THE GOVERNMENT WILL PROBABLY STICK
TO ITS DESIRE FOR THE UN TO PLAY A ROLE AND ITS INTENTION
TO LEAVE AS GRACEFULLY AS POSSIBLE IF THE SITUATION
BECOMES UNTENABLE. INGERSOLL

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